APPENDIX D. FOREST PLAN MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

Projects that take place on National Forest System lands are guided by the desired conditions, goals, objectives, management direction, and standards and guidelines set out in the forest plan specific to each national forest. The Forest Plan for the Toiyabe National Forest (1986), as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan (2004) embodies the provisions of National Forest Management Act (NFMA), its implementing regulations, and other guiding documents. There are also management area prescriptions for the management area in which the project area is located, Alpine County. The primary sources of management direction from the Toiyabe Forest Plan that affect livestock grazing management are described below. Appendix C provides a summary of how the Proposed Action is consistent with Forest Plan Direction as well as desired conditions, goals and objectives.

TOIYABE NATIONAL FOREST LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Projects that take place on National Forest System lands are guided by the desired conditions, goals, objectives, management direction, and standards and guidelines set out in the land and resource management plan specific to each national forest. A land and resource management plan embody the provisions of National Forest Management Act (NFMA), its implementing regulations, and other guiding documents.

The Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) sets out the direction for managing the land and resources of the Forest (USDA FS 1986). Desired conditions for the Forest are established during the forest planning process. The Forest Plan identifies the following standards and guidelines that intersect with livestock grazing:

- Describe ecological sites, develop SCORE cards to rate ecological status and resource values, and define management strategies for rangeland management. (pg. IV-26).

- Strive to achieve or maintain a minimum of 60 percent ground cover on upland rangelands with the exceptions of low sagebrush types, Wyoming big sagebrush types, crested wheatgrass seedings, pinyon/juniper types, and south facing sagebrush types on granitic slopes of the Sierra Nevada. (pg. IV-26).

- Conduct monitoring and evaluation in accordance with FSH 2209.21, Range Environmental Analysis Handbook, and the Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook. (pg. IV-26).

- Achieve or maintain rangeland in satisfactory condition which is defined as: (1) having a resource value rating (RVR) of 50 or above for vegetation or other features; or (2) being in a mid-succession or higher class of ecological status; and (3) having a stable or upward trend in soil and vegetation. (pg. IV-26-27).

- Implement non-continuous use management systems on all livestock grazing allotments. When feasible, use a rest rotation system when significant range is in unsatisfactory condition. (IV-27).

- Forage Utilization Standards obtained from the 1986 Forest Plan are to be used as maximum standards for the development of proper use criteria. In 2001 and 2004, the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan amended the Toiyabe Plan and provided new grazing standards for riparian areas. Design of management systems will include the specific utilization standards to be applied.

These standards should be applied based on utilization of key plant species by key area. Soil disturbance may also be used to determine proper use and is often the best measure of proper use on sheep ranges and on granitic slopes. (USDA 1986 IV-28-29).

- Proper use criteria will be established, in writing, for each unit of each grazing allotment. Proper use criteria are a mandatory part of each allotment management plan. Long-term trend studies are also mandatory to determine if proper use criteria are correct and to determine what is occurring in regard to range condition. Establishing proper use criteria requires Interdisciplinary (ID) team involvement. Proper use criteria define the permissible grazing level in the range unit or pasture (IV-30).

FOREST SERVICE HANDBOOK 2209.21

Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 2209.21 describes rangeland health in terms of the desired conditions of vegetation, soils, and associated resources for which objectives have been stated. The Intermountain Region Rangeland Ecosystem Analysis and Monitoring Handbook (FSH 2209.21, Ch. Zero Code) define rangeland health. For detailed information on rangeland health refer to the Leviathan-Loope Vegetation Specialist Report 2019.

MANAGEMENT AREA DIRECTION- ALPINE MANAGEMENT AREA

- Complete nine initial range allotment plans and update one plan (IV-90).
- Complete 10,240 acres of initial range analysis and 3,100 acres of updated analysis (IV-90).
- Administer and manage 14 grazing allotments, and complete examinations on 14 allotments. (IV-90).

MANAGEMENT AREA DIRECTION- EXISTING WILDERNESS

- Livestock grazing operations, where established prior to designation of wilderness, shall, pursuant to Sec. 4(d) (4) (2) of the Wilderness Act, be permitted to continue, subject to provisions of 36 CFR 293. "Committee Guidelines and Policies Regarding Grazing in National Forest Wilderness Areas" (H.R. Report No. 96-1126, dated 6/24/80) will be applied in a practical, reasonable, and uniform manner in all National Forest wildernesses. These guidelines and policies are applicable only to livestock grazing operations (USDA FS 1986, p. IV-109).

SIERRA NEVADA FOREST PLAN AMENDMENTS

The Toiyabe Forest Plan was amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA) in 2001 and 2004 and includes additional direction related to desired conditions and livestock grazing within Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs). Riparian Conservation areas are land allocations that are managed to maintain or restore the function of aquatic, riparian and meadow ecosystems (USDA 2001 ROD pp. A-7). RCAs generally include all vegetation within 300 feet of the bank full edge of a perennial stream and 150 feet from seasonally flowing streams.

Desired conditions for meadows within RCAs include maintaining the “ecological status of meadow vegetation in late seral condition” (50 percent or more of the relative cover of the herbaceous layer is late seral with high similarity to the potential natural community) (USDA 2004 ROD pp42). Management direction related to meeting the desired condition includes the following Riparian Conservation Objectives (RCO):

1.) The SNFPA sets maximum utilization levels on forage use in meadows based on the grazing system being used on the allotment. For season-long grazing on meadows in early seral status, the SNFPA limits livestock utilization of grass and grass-like plants to 30 percent (or minimum 6-inch stubble height). If the meadows are in late seral status livestock utilization of grass and grass-like plants is limited to a maximum of 40 percent (or minimum 4-inch stubble height). Ecological status is to be determined by using Regional ecological scorecards and range plant list in regional range handbooks. If meadow ecological status is determined to be moving in a downward trend, grazing is to be modified or suspended (USDA 2004-RCO #5-120, pp. 65).

2.) Under intensive grazing systems (such as rest-rotation and deferred rotation) where meadows are receiving a period of rest, utilization levels can be higher than the levels described above if the meadow is maintained in late seral status and meadow-associated species are not being impacted. Degraded meadows require total rest from grazing until they have recovered and have moved to mid- or late seral status. Degraded meadows are defined as those in early seral status with greater than 10 percent of the meadow area in bare soil and active erosion (USDA 2004-RCO #5-120, pp. 65).

3.) Browsing is limited to no more than 20 percent of the annual leader growth of mature riparian shrubs and no more than 20 percent of individual seedlings. Livestock are to be removed from any area of an allotment when browsing indicates a change in livestock preference from grazing herbaceous vegetation to browsing woody riparian vegetation (USDA 2004-RCO #5-121, pp. 65

4.) Prevent disturbance to streambanks and natural lake and pond shorelines from exceeding 20 percent of stream reach or 20 percent of natural lake and pond shorelines. Disturbance includes bank sloughing, chiseling, trampling, and other means of exposing bare soil or cutting plant roots (USDA 2004-RCO #2-103 pp. 63).

GREATER SAGE-GROUSE BI-STATE DPS FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT

The proposed action is guided by additional direction in the Greater Sage-grouse Bi-state DPS Forest Plan Amendment and Record of Decision (USDA 201). Grazing permits will include the appropriate Standards (S) and Guidelines (G) from this amendment to move toward or maintain the desired condition for sage grouse habitat. Management direction related to livestock grazing and sage grouse habitat management are as follows:

RP-S-01: Grazing permits, annual operating instructions, or other appropriate mechanism for livestock management shall include terms, conditions, and direction to move toward or maintain bi-state DPS habitat desired conditions.

RP-G-01: In bi-state DPS habitat, consider closure of grazing allotments, pastures, or portions of pastures, or managing the allotment as a forage reserve as consistent with maintaining sage-grouse habitat based on desired conditions as opportunities arise under applicable regulations, where removal of livestock grazing would enhance the ability to achieve desired bi-state DPS habitat conditions.

RI-S-01: Any new structural range improvements and location of supplements (salt or protein blocks) shall not retard the conservation, enhancement, or restoration of bi-state sage grouse habitat.

RI-S-02: Salting or supplemental feeding stations shall not be located within 2 miles of an active lek and 0.6 miles from riparian areas.

RI-S-03: Water developments (tanks/troughs) shall be drained when not in use, unless they are needed by other species, so they do not create a breeding habitat for mosquitos that carry West Nile Virus.

RI-S-04: Wildlife escape ramps shall be installed and maintained in water troughs or open water facilities with vertical embankments that pose a drowning risk to birds.

RI-S-05: Water developments at springs and seeps shall be maintained to preserve the continuity of predevelopment riparian areas. Modifications to the developments shall be neutral or beneficial to the bi-state sage grouse.

RI-S-06: Livestock watering and handling facilities (corrals, chutes, dipping vats, etc.) or sheep bedding grounds shall not be located within 2 miles of an active lek and 0.6 miles from riparian areas.

RI-G-01: Authorize new water development for diversion from spring or seep source only when habitat would benefit from the development. The intent of this guideline is to move toward desired habitat conditions (Table 2-1, final EIS) when restoring habitat or mitigating disturbance.

RU-S-01: Manage livestock grazing to maintain residual cover of herbaceous vegetation so as to reduce predation during breeding/nesting season (March 1 to June 30 critical disturbance period; dates may shift 2 weeks back or forward in atypically dry or wet years based on observations of breeding/nesting activity).

RU-S-02: Manage livestock grazing in accordance with the utilization standards in this table.

Community Type	Percent Utilization of Key Species	Terms and Conditions
Mountain Big Sagebrush	<45% herbaceous species; <35% shrub species	Livestock removed in 5 days of reaching utilization level
Wyoming and Basin Big Sagebrush	<35% herbaceous species; <35% shrub species	Livestock removed in 5 days of reaching utilization level
Black Sagebrush	<35% herbaceous species; <35% shrub species	Livestock removed in 5 days of reaching utilization level
Riparian and Wet Meadows	<50% herbaceous species; <35% woody species (current year's growth); or average stubble height of at least 4 to 6 inches (depending on site capability and potential) for herbaceous riparian vegetation	Average stubble height 4 to 6 inches: Livestock removed in 5 days of reaching utilization level based on site; or (sequential action) no grazing from May 15 to August 30 in brood-rearing habitat